

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /086 W
-----140821Z 059385 /15

R 140700Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4444
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONGEN DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3692

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, PROP, EG, ET, FT, SO, SU, US

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN PERCEPTIONS OF RED SEA AREA

1. CHARGE CALLED ON BERHANU DINKA, DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF
AFRICAN AFFAIRS, MOFA, JUNE 9 FOR TOUR D'HORIZON ON RED SEA
AREA. FOLLOWING EMERGED:

A. SUDAN - BERHANU WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC ON FUTURE OF
SUDANESE/ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS. HE FEARED THAT CURRENT TRAIN
OF EVENTS WAS GAINING MOMENTUM OF ITS OWN THAT MIGHT BE
IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTROL AND DID NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY OF OPEN
HOSTILITIES. HE DID NOT PUT MUCH FAITH IN TANZANIAN
EFFORTS TO MEDIATE. IN HIS VIEW, CURRENT SITUATION
CAME ABOUT BECAUSE OF NIMEIRI'S SWITCH ON ERITREA, AND
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IF THERE WAS TO BE ANY IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS, INITIA-
TIVE WOULD NOW HAVE TO COME FROM SUDAN.

B. TFAI - BERHANU WAS RELATIVELY MORE RELAXED
ON TFAI, SAYING ETHIOPIA HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HASSAN
GOULED AND THERE WAS UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THEM. HE
THEN PICKED THEME OF MOFA STATEMENT JUNE 4 (ADDIS 3525)

CONCERNING HARM BEING DONE TO DJIBOUTIANS BECAUSE OF RAILWAY SABOTAGE AT DIREDAWA, ALLEGING THAT ETHIOPIANS HAD INFO DJIBOUTIANS WERE VERY UPSET WITH SOMALIS AS RESULT. (BERHANU PROBABLY WROTE MOFA STATEMENT -- DJIBOUTI MAY WISH COMMENT.)

C. EGYPT - BERHANU MADE IT CLEAR ETHIOPIANS DO NOT CONSIDER THEIR RELATIONS WITH EGYPT TO BE GOOD, BUT HIS ONLY OBSERVATION WAS IN RESPONSE TO A COMMENT BY THE CHARGE THAT HE (CHARGE) WAS NOT AWARE THAT EGYPT HAD TAKEN ANY STANCE ON ERITREA THAT SEEMED PARTICULARLY OFFENSIVE TO ETHIOPIA. WITHOUT DIRECTLY COMMENTING, BERHANU QUICKLY POINTED TO EGYPTIAN STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SUDAN (WHICH APPARENTLY WERE ENOUGH TO CAUSE PRESENT SITUATION), AND ASKED WHETHER CHARGE KNEW THERE WERE 30,000 EGYPTIAN TROOPS IN SUDAN (CHARGE CONFESSED IGNORANCE).

D. SOMALIA - BERHANU HAD NO COMMENTS ON SOMALIA OTHER THAN THE REFERENCE TO THE RAILWAY IN (B) ABOVE.

E. OAU CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING, LIBREVILLE - ETHIOPIA'S PROBLEMS WOULD NOT BE ON AGENDA AT LIBREVILLE, BUT ETHIOPIA NONETHELESS WOULD FIND OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE COMPLETE STATEMENT THERE. BERHANU ASSUMED THAT BOTH SUDAN AND SOMALIA WOULD THEN WISH TO REPLY. HE WAS VAGUE ON HOW ALL THIS WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED.

F. UNITED STATES - CHARGE MADE POINT SEVERAL TIMES
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THAT USG WAS IN NO WAY ENGAGED IN MASTERMINDING SOME KIND OF IMPERIALIST PLOT INVOLVING ETHIOPIA'S ARAB NEIGHBORS AND DIRECTED AGAINST ETHIOPIA AS IS BEING REPEATEDLY ALLEGED IN ETHIOPIAN MEDIA AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS, NOR IN SUPPORTING ANY OF ETHIOPIA'S INTERNAL ENEMIES. CHARGE THOUGHT COUNTRIES INVOLVED WERE PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF MAKING THEIR OWN DECISIONS BASED UPON THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS EXACTLY AS COUNTRIES ALL OVER WORLD DID, INCLUDING ETHIOPIA. BERHANU NOTED POINT, BUT CHARGE CANNOT SAY WITH CERTAINTY HOW MUCH BERHANU BELIEVED IT. DISCUSSION LED TO ONE OF ETHIOPIA'S FAVORITE CURRENT WHIPPING BOYS, JOHN SPENCER, AND HIS REPORT TO SEN. CLARK'S SUB-COMMITTEE LAST SUMMER. CHARGE ONCE AGAIN MADE POINT THAT SPENCER WAS PRIVATE CITIZEN (NOT CIA AGENT) WITH LONG PRE-REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE IN ETHIOPIA (BERHANU KNEW HIM) WHO HAD GIVEN CLARK COMMITTEE HIS PERSONAL VIEWS. THEY COULD NOT IN ANY WAY BE INTERPRETED AS VIEWS OF USG. BERHANU ACKNOWLEDGED POINT, BUT SAID MANY ETHIOPIANS BELIEVE THAT USG IS

FOLLOWING SPENCER SCRIPT ALL THE SAME (COMMENT --
WITHOUT REALLY KNOWING WHAT SPENCER HAD TO SAY).

2. COMMENT: BERHANU'S COMMENTS ON SUDAN (HE WAS ALSO
CRITICAL OF C-130 ARRANGEMENT) WERE PROBABLY HONEST SINCE
BERHANU TENDS TO BE FAIRLY CANDID, BUT NEED TO BE TAKEN
WITH SMALL GRAIN OF SALT -- HE HAS BEEN BEARISH ON
SUDAN BEFORE. THAT HE IS DEEPLY CONCERNED, HOWEVER,
WAS EVIDENT. HIS COMMENTS ON TFAI SUGGEST A GREATER
ETHIOPIAN ACCOMMODATION WITH POST-ELECTION RESULTS THAN
HAS BEEN CASE IN PAST AND CAN PROBABLY BE INTERPRETED AT
LEAST FOR TIME BEING AS SIGN THAT ETHIOPIA MAY BE WILLING
GIVE POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS A REAL
TRY SO LONG AS SOMALIA REMAINS OUT OF THE ACT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 14-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ADDIS03692
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770211-0752
Format: TEL
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770661/aaaacbfj.tel
Line Count: 130
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 97b0c97d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2168805
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ETHIOPIAN PERCEPTIONS OF RED SEA AREA
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, PROP, EG, ET, FT, SO, SU, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/97b0c97d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009